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SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY LEW'S MEETING WITH JOHN HOLMES

Classified By: AMBASSADOR SUSAN E. RICE, REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Summary: On April 17, Deputy Secretary Jacob Lew met with Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes in New York. Lew and Holmes discussed a wide range of humanitarian concerns including Sudan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The meeting also briefly touched on humanitarian developments in Sri Lanka and Iraq. End Summary.

Sudan

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12. (C) Holmes and Lew discussed Special Envoy Gration's report, which Holmes described as very positive. Holmes stated that if the USG extends the offer of a better bi-lateral relationship, the Government of Sudan (GOS) may be more likely to honor commitments made in the agreement. On the issue of seized non-governmental organization (NGO) assets, both concurred that the recovery of computers and data is vital. Holmes noted that pushing the GOS to return these and other physical assets is a top UN priority. However, Holmes twice mentioned that many humanitarian staff are traumatized by GOS actions surrounding the NGO expulsions. Predicting that some staff will not return to Sudan, Holmes noted that the lack of NGO capacity will be further exacerbated. Holmes described the April 16 donor's conference as productive and emphasized the importance of political muscle from the donor community as well as a high-level forum through which to hold the GOS accountable. Lew noted that since this is an intentionally created humanitarian crisis, the U.S. and international community need to hold the GOS accountable. Both Lew and Holmes agreed that the humanitarian imperative is paramount in Sudan.

Pakistan/Afghanistan

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13. (C) The discussion focused on the enormous challenges facing the humanitarian response in Pakistan and Afghanistan due to ongoing insecurity. Holmes noted that the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) intentionally separated their office in Afghanistan from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in an effort to draw a distinction between the humanitarian response and political/military efforts and by doing so to provide some level of protection for humanitarian staff -- a top priority. Lew noted that while the U.S. military is actively engaged in humanitarian and development work in Afghanistan, it is a matter of necessity rather than choice. Lew also emphasized the importance of demonstrating ongoing

USG commitment beyond counter-insurgency efforts.

¶4. (C) The UN is trying to ramp up operations along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border to assist the displaced. Holmes described Pakistan as a failing state, and Lew concurred that the stakes are very high. Both agreed that stabilizing Pakistan must be a top priority.

Iraq

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¶5. (C) Holmes noted that Iraq's humanitarian crisis may not be as severe as it was 18 months ago. Although Iraq still has many IDPs, they do not necessarily have the greatest need for assistance among the Iraqi population. Holmes also questioned the high refugee figures in Syria and Jordan, noting that only one tenth of those reported have actually registered with UNHCR. Holmes recognized the U.N.'s need for a more nuanced understanding of the humanitarian situation in Iraq but noted that without the ability to get more international staff moving around in-country, this is unlikely to occur.

Sri Lanka

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¶6. (C) Holmes mentioned that Vijay Nambiar, Secretary-General Ban's chief-of-staff, has held talks in Colombo with the Sri Lankan president on the fate of civilians trapped in the no-fire zone, but that the Government of Sri Lanka appears disinclined to resume the

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humanitarian pause. The UN hopes to get a team into the no-fire zone to negotiate the evacuation of civilians, although they believe that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) are not prepared to release civilians en masse. The UN is seeking a way forward, but Holmes described the situation as worrying.

Funding

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¶7. (C) Holmes closed the meeting by expressing appreciation for ongoing USG financial support and appealed for increased funding for OCHA and for enhanced USG funding for the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). Lew responded that the USG recognizes the importance of contingency funding in emergency response, but made no funding promises or commitments.

Rice